

# Cockatiel care sheet

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**Lifespan:** 15-30 years

**Length:** 30-33cm (adult)

**Origin:** Australia

**Behaviour:**

*Cockatiels are among the best “starter birds” available. A hand-raised baby cockatiel will grow up to be a charming pet with appropriate attention and care. A cockatiel’s sweet personality, tameness, and ability to bond with its human family make it a great choice even for someone who may not normally think of a bird as a pet.*

**Cage size:** Minimum of 24” H, 18” W

**Diet:** Mixture of Cockatiel seed, pellets, fresh fruit and vegetable, calcium blocks

**Talking ability:** Excellent, we can be trained to talk, whistle and sing.

## What you need to house your cockatiel:

- Cage (bigger the better)
- Shell grit
- Cockatiel seed
- Vetafarm mini or small pellets (depending on age)
- Sulfa aid
- Wormer, Mite & lice spray
- Cage cleaner
- Perches (different sizes and materials)
- Food and water bowl
- Calcium bell, Cuttlebone
- Toys
- Cage cover (to cover at night)
- Cage tidy (to stop seed falling onto the floor)

## Diet

*Your cockatiel's diet is extremely important and is the key to a healthy cockatiel along with exercise. Cockatiels need variety in their diet, seed alone is not a complete balanced diet. It is essential for your bird's health that they be fed a combination of Cockatiel seed, pellets (Vetafarm-Nutriblend Small), fruit and vegetables. Most seeds are very high in fat and when given the choice birds will select seeds with the highest fat content over the ones with lower fat content. Sunflower seeds contain 47-49% fat and safflower 24.6% fat which is why your cockatiel will always eat these first. Sunflower seeds are thought to be the “Cupcakes and Twinkies” of the avian world. Birds can have high cholesterol levels, become obese, get stroke, heart attacks and other heart problems, or*

*develop serious illnesses such as fatty liver syndrome which is fatal. Cockatiel's may also enjoy small amounts of yoghurt (low fat) boiled egg, chicken, fish or beef.*

## WHAT TO FEED:

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Cockatiel seed, pellets (Vetafarm "Bird Maintenance and/or Nutriblend pellets")

### Vegetables:

Sprouts, Spinach, Turnip Greens, Swiss chard, Mustard Greens, Broccoli, Escarole, Chicory, Tomatoes, Beet Greens, Bok Choy, Grated Carrots, Collard greens, Corn on the Cob, Endive, Kale, Yams, Pumpkin, Sweet potato, (cockatiels like Yams, Pumpkin and Sweet Potato better when they are cooked).

### Fruits:

Mangos, Cantaloupe, Apricots, Nectarines, Papayas, Peaches Apples, Bananas, Grapes, Oranges. Make sure your cockatiel does not have any seeds from fruits, some can be very dangerous, like Cherry pits as they may contain trace amounts of cyanide.

### Protein and Meat:

It's OK for your cockatiel to eat chicken, fish or beef, again we are talking here very small amounts. Other sources of protein and cooked eggs (hard boiled or scrambled), yogurt, cottage cheese and peanuts.

### WHAT NOT TO FEED:

- *Avocado, chocolate, fruit seeds, alcohol, caffeine, cabbage, raw potato, asparagus, eggplant, milk, cream, sugar and high fat treats.*

**Fresh water should be supplied each morning, make sure the dish is well scrubbed to remove slime or faecal matter.**

## *Housing*

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The larger the cage the better, your cockatiel should be able to flap its wings without the risks of causing injury. Keep an eye on the spacing between the bars as you wouldn't want to risk your bird's head getting stuck or them getting out. Give your bird different sized perches throughout the enclosure to exercise their feet and help prevent arthritis. These can be natural branches from your backyard, make sure that they are cleaned using hot water and a sponge to remove bacteria, sap or droppings from wild birds. Perches should be at least 5" long and 1-2" in diameter. A calcium or pumice perch should also be supplied to keep your birds nails and beak trim. Cockatiels can be kept alone to bond with their owner or in pairs to bond with each other. Different types of birds should **not** be housed together. Remember to keep your cockatiel in a draft free safe area, preferably where the family is located so he feels like he is part of the family. Cover your bird at night (especially in winter) with a towel or blanket to stop drafts and to reduce stress to the bird. Clean and disinfect the habitat and perches regularly (every week), replace substrate or habitat liner twice weekly or more often as needed. Replace perches, dishes, and toys when worn or damaged. Rotate

new toys into the habitat regularly to provide mental stimulation and to prevent your cockatiel from becoming bored/ lonely or depressed. Ensure that there are no habitat parts or toys with lead, zinc or lead-based paints or galvanized parts as these can cause serious medical issues if ingested by your bird. Birds tend to lick their cage, toys and just about everything and anything kept in their enclosure. For this reason it is important that a natural cleaning product be used when cleaning occurs. Be sure to reduce the amount of chemicals used throughout the house (flea bombs, moxitein sprays etc) as these fumes can be harmful.

When considering appropriate toys for your feathered pal, try and choose colourful (we can see all colours and are particularly fond of bright ones), shiny and textured toys as this will mentally stimulate your birds mind and keep him happy whilst you go about your everyday life.

#### **Recommended toys-**

- Natural wood toys (these are particularly great for gnawing the beak and nails down)
- Lofa shapes
- Colourful block toys
- Swings (we love to swing all day long)
- Shiny bells
- Toys with approved leather attached
- Snugly hammocks (to keep us warm and safe)
- Mirrors (not recommended if you want your cockatiel to stay tame or if they are kept in pairs as they can think the mirror is their mate and become protective over it.

## *Treatments*

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**Sulfa Aid-** Sulfa Aid bird medication is for the control and treatment of caecal coccidiosis and enteritis in cage birds. Bird cage should be thoroughly cleaned daily to avoid re-infestation if this occurs. Sulfa Aid should be added to the water when new birds are purchased, introduced to aviaries or after heavy rain.

**Mite and Lice spray-** Your feathered friend should be treated with mite & lice spray every 3 months as prevention. If you are “treating” for mite and lice they should be treated twice a day for up to 14 days. The enclosure should also be regularly cleaned (remove all bedding every 2 days to remove eggs and larvae of the mite and lice). Keep a close eye on your “birdy’s” skin during this time. If symptoms persist visit an animal care facility or a vet.

#### **Signs of mite and lice are:**

Excess scratching, redness and feather loss may occur. If symptoms persist visit an animal care facility or a vet.

The common signs if your bird has worms are weight loss, diarrhoea and loss of appetite. Treat your cockatiel if you notice these symptoms or every 3 months. If symptoms persist visit an animal care facility or a vet.

***Remember to monitor your bird's health regularly as birds can be very good at hiding sickness or disease. Watch out for puffy feathers, being inactive, sleeping a lot, not their usual chirpy self. If signs of illness occur contact your local avian Vet for advice.***

